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*Apple-Blossoms. From a Sketch by A. T. Bricher.*

pictures indicate knowledge, industry, and skill, and are yearly going further and further in their use of the resources that modern times have endowed Art with. His academic instincts, which once were strong, are gradually breaking up; his studies in the schools of the Art-Students' League have opened to his pencil a

new and inviting vista. That hold upon the popular affection which so many artists affect to despise when they have it not, but which not one of them was ever known wilfully to relinquish, has long been a substantial ornament of Mr. Bricher's career. His pictures sell equally well, whether in oil or in water-colours.

## DECORATION IN EXCESS.

THE wide distinction practically maintained throughout Japan, between an unlimited range of fancy in decorative Art on the one hand and limits strictly defined in the individual home decoration on the other, has in a large measure escaped the current of our popular knowledge heretofore. Otherwise the tendency to lavishness in the direction of Japanese Art, to be noted here, would probably have been modified to a greater or less degree, for the fact, that simplicity is the rule in Japan for Art within the house, rightly bears a suggestion relative to the adaptation of that style of Art elsewhere. No fact could any better be allowed to influence our manner of decoration than that of these studiously simple arrangements, which, it should be remembered, are planned in the very midst of multitudinous Art-graces, of colour daintily lapped and curled about colour, of forms wreathed curiously in infinite successions. The finest interiors there usually present only a few objects at once. A series of Art-objects chosen to decorate a room, after a time gives place to a new group, and the latter is in turn succeeded by another entirely distinct arrangement. Thus the variety comes in separate portions, marshalled successively in a certain strict order, the seasons taking their turn. The first idea of an abiding-place, as all persons know, is that of use, and the majority feel that there is no less wisdom than delight in rendering this, besides, the most beautiful of all places known. To

the latter idea there need be really no limit, except such as comes from the former; but wherever decoration interferes with essential home use it becomes straightway an impertinence, for thus there is an obtrusion of a lesser idea to the exclusion of what is more serious and imminent.

Decoration inappropriately applied is still more opposed to canons of taste than the overcrowding of objects which are artistically proper themselves. It is an unfitness, for instance, in its way, for an article like a whisk-broom, costing a dime, to be provided with a screen of pale-blue satin, draped about the upper portion, displaying beautifully painted designs, as is one of the minor fashions; Art-drapery of this character would more suitably serve as a covering for such an object as the snuff-box of a prince or a Rothschild, valued in Art at six thousand dollars, the price paid at the Donato sale for this variety of article—which is such as may very properly be enriched by Art. And probably decoration is carried as wide from its proper limits as it easily could be in common things of use, when candles are made to trench on such ambitious ground, and are raised so far out of the range of articles of consumption that unwillingness to light one in case of necessity could only be like that of splitting some decorative panel into kindling-wood. Nothing is more detrimental to results of artistic efforts than continually losing sight of a distinction necessary to be made between the

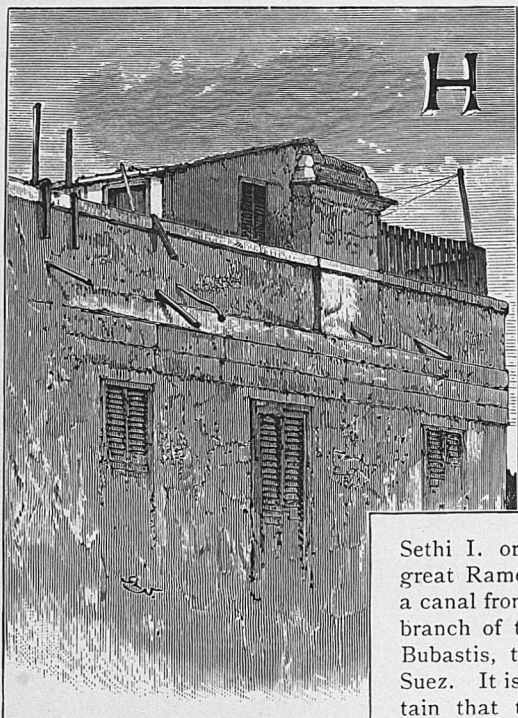
decorating of objects in relation to which the primary idea is that of use, and the decorating of those which are designed solely for decoration as such. A deeper sense of propriety, again, would preclude decoration of any kind in many places where it is freely made use of. Thus, the substance forming the lining of a sea-shell presents a very beautiful surface, and, removed from its natural situation, this would be no unfit background for Art-designs; but a scene painted within the shell is out of place. There is the same kind of unsuitability in painting designs on a feather intended to be

made use of as a quill-pen, from the fact that this is an unaltered part of a natural organization, and decoration applied to such an object is, in point of taste, only a degree removed from the tattooing of a Bedouin or South-Sea Islander. Art, strictly speaking, changes natural substances when adapting them to its ends, not being frequently tempted to apply its colours to organised forms of Nature, and we cannot justify, on correct principles, any direct addition of Art-designs to finished and beautiful natural objects.

## THE SUEZ CANAL.

By EDWARD THOMAS ROGERS, ESQ., LATE H.M. CONSUL AT CAIRO, AND HIS SISTER, MARY ELIZA ROGERS.

THE DRAWINGS BY GEORGE L. SEYMOUR.



OW many centuries ago the idea of uniting the Red Sea with the Mediterranean by means of a canal was first conceived it is impossible to conjecture; but we have historical proofs that during the nineteenth dynasty either

Sethi I. or his son, the great Rameses II., made a canal from the Pelusiac branch of the Nile, near Bubastis, to the Gulf of Suez. It is not quite certain that the work was completed in his time,

though it is more than probable; but we find that Necho II., in the twenty-sixth dynasty, recommenced the work, and cleared out the bed, which had, even in the twentieth dynasty, been filled up by the shifting sands.

In the twenty-seventh dynasty Darius I. worked vigorously at the canal, and Professor Brugsch mentions several memorial stones and the statue of a king with Egyptian hieroglyphs and cuneiform inscriptions, which were found near the line of the canal to the north of Suez. But according to Strabo's account, quoted by Oppert, Darius desisted from the work because he had been informed that the level of Egypt was lower than that of the Red Sea, and that the latter would inundate the whole country if the canal were completed.

In the thirty-third dynasty, about B.C. 285, Ptolemy (II.) Philadelphus re-established the canal which united the two seas, and called it the River of Ptolemy. This canal was again choked up before the time of Cleopatra, and it is doubtful whether during the Roman occupation Trajan or Adrian attempted its re-excavation.

In the middle of the seventh century of our era—or according to Al-Kindy, quoted by Ali-l-Mahâsin, in A.H. 23—by order of the Khalifat 'Umar, the canal from the Nile to the Red Sea was remade and kept in repair for a certain time. It was called the Canal of the Commander of the Faithful, the immediate object of its construction being to supply food to the

people of the holy cities of Makkah and Al-Madînah, who were in great distress from famine.

In the winter of 1798-99 Napoleon Bonaparte, accompanied by a select party of *savants* and engineers, explored a part of the course of the old canal, from Suez northwards, with the idea of reconnecting the two seas; and the whole party were in considerable danger of being drowned in the Gulf of Suez on that occasion. But it was not until this century that the work of connecting the two seas by a direct maritime canal was conceived and successfully effected. All former canals appear to have been of fresh water from the Nile.

An idea long prevailed that the level of the Red Sea was much higher than that of the Mediterranean. Napoleon's chief engineer, Lepère, by a mistake in his calculations, was led to believe, and to state in his report, that the level of the Red Sea was eleven yards higher than that of the Mediterranean.

In 1831 M. Ferdinand de Lesseps was sent to Alexandria as *élève-consul*, and whilst in quarantine there the French consul supplied him with books to while away the weary hours of detention. Amongst these books was Lepère's memorandum on the scheme for connecting the two seas by a canal. This made such an impression on his mind that during the rest of his stay in Egypt he continued to study the question, and afterwards determined to endeavour to carry the idea into execution. In this undertaking he was opposed most violently, and even practical engineers expressed their opinion that the work was not feasible. Even when the canal was nearly finished to within a short distance of the depression of the Bitter Lakes, the theory was advanced and maintained by adverse critics that the evaporation would be so excessive as to prevent the lakes being filled by the two narrow streams, and that the current would be so great that navigation would be impossible.

These discouraging predictions only served as an incentive to M. de Lesseps's energies. Indeed, he has been heard to say that but for Lord Palmerston's opposition to the scheme, the canal would probably not have been finished in our time. He would have relinquished the combat against the difficulties that presented themselves; but with such an opponent as Lord Palmerston ranged against him, his *amour-propre* was touched, and he determined to proceed and to overcome all obstacles.

When the enterprise was successfully completed, and all adverse prophecies were belied, the canal was inaugurated with an amount of splendour and *éclat* that has been unequalled on any other occasion. On the 17th of November, 1869, in the presence of the Empress Eugénie, the Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria, the Prince and Princess of the Netherlands, the Crown Prince of Prussia, and ambassadors and diplomatic agents from the other Governments, besides a crowd of *savants* from all parts of the world, all of whom the ex-Khedive Ismail had invited to the ceremony, the inauguration of the canal was celebrated by eloquent addresses and prayers from Muhammedan Sheikhs, Jewish Rabbis, and representatives of the clergy of almost every recognised Christian community. This occurred